



The Fight Against Colorism in the Black Community

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Abstract

Since centuries ago African Americans have experienced discrimination more times than any other minority group. In 1983, Alice Walker introduced the term **colorism** which is, prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group. Literature suggest this stems back to slavery when slave masters awarded special privileges to African Americans of a lighter skin tone. This study examines the relationship between skin tones and the effects it has on the African American Culture.



Objectives

1. To identify the effects colorism has on the African American community
2. To identify strategies for reducing colorism in the African American community

Main Arguments

- African American adolescence are at the highest target rate of discrimination in America.
- Studies have shown that darker skinned African Americans addressed facing more discrimination than those with a lighter skin tone
- Brown Bag Society-comprised of African Americans who were lighter than brown paper bags -African American and only being valued if you have a resemblance similar to Eurocentric features
- Skin tone hierarchy- where having a skin tone that similar to the dominate group can be an advantage
- “Scale of skin color darkness”
- Hateful language developed as the black community continued to divide (yellow face, white wash, jiggaboos, light blacks, and black blacks)
- Spike Lee’s movie “School Daze” highlights colorism where it shows the jiggaboos (dark skin) VS the wannabes (light skin)
- Just recently studies showed darker-skinned black Americans continue to be far worse than lighter-skinned ones in key metrics shaping society, from pay and jail time to self-confidence and rates of marriage.



Results & Conclusions

Research shows that youth with the lightest complexion (light brown) had more positive interactions than its darker counterparts in attending college, social economic status, family and relationships. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97) found that colorism had a greater effect on African American females than males when measuring achievement especially in the work place.

Reducing Colorism

- Start acknowledging colorism exists
- Stress the beauty of all people, regardless of shade, hair texture, race, etc.
- Be aware of your own prejudices and biases
- Know that media images are not real
- Finally truly believe that every shade of Black is beautiful including yours.



Challenges

- "Unfortunately, I think it's more accepted to be light skinned in America," said junior Kyle McMurtry.

Social Media Hashtags

- #TeamLightSkin: Viewed as prettier, smarter, outgoing, approachable “You’re not black enough”
- #TeamDarkSkin: Viewed as rugged, unattractive, ghetto and constant attitude
- Darker skin blacks are fearful of their future “Lighter skinned African Americans are favored more”

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